

# BRIEFLY



Fire fighters battle a New Year's Eve blaze in Seoul's Kwangmyung area which tore through a two-story shopping mall destroying 130 small shops, most of them closed for the New Year holiday. Four people were injured in the fire. — AFP/UNB photo

**Memorial hospital in Dawali:** Indian authorities are to build a memorial hospital in Dawali, the northern Indian town where at least 396 people died in a school function fire, the chief minister of the region said Saturday, AFP reports from New Delhi.

The Press Trust of India (PTI) quoted Haryana state Chief Minister Bhajan Lal as saying that the hospital would be built in memory of those who died on December 23 when a fire in a marquee killed nearly 400 people and injuring 94 others.

**Ramos to free 21 prisoners:** President Fidel Ramos on Saturday approved the release of 21 people serving prison terms for crimes related to political activities, AP reports from Manila, Philippines.

One person on trial also was ordered released in what was seen as a government response to calls for an end to the vestiges of the late President Ferdinand Marcos' strongman rule.

**KL deports 472 Indonesians:** Authorities on Saturday deported 472 Indonesians, including a 4-day-old baby girl, on charges of being in Malaysia illegally, AP reports from Kuala Lumpur.

The Indonesians had been held for one to three weeks at the Semenyih Temporary Detention Camp, and the baby was born in a nearby government hospital in Kajang, 30 kilometres (18 miles) south of Kuala Lumpur, said Senior Immigration Officer Abdul Rahim Endut.

**Attack on Kurds continues:** Government troops on Saturday kept up their attack on Kurdish rebels in the eastern mountains, said Turkish news reports, putting the death toll at 13 in three days of fighting, AP reports from Sivas, Turkey.

The clashes marked the first time the military has moved its fight to Sivas province, 450 kilometres (270 miles) from the capital Ankara.

**32 journalists killed in CIS:** Thirty-two journalists were killed in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in 1995 compared with 18 last year, a Russian press freedom watchdog group told Interfax news agency Saturday, AFP reports from Moscow.

Oleg Panfilov of the Glasnost Fund said 15 journalists were killed in Russia and 10 in the breakaway Caucasus republic of Chechnya in 1995, where Russian troops have been battling separatist rebels for the past year.

**Sao Tome PM resigns:** Sao Tome and Principe Prime Minister Carlos Da Graça resigned Saturday, opening the way for a government of national unity headed by his deputy Armando Vaz d'Almeida, outgoing Information Minister Antonio Quintas said, AFP reports from Sao Tome.

The new consensus government was to have taken office Friday but was delayed by last minute differences on the ministers from the Independent Democratic Alliance (ADI), one of the three parties that will share power.

**13 more executed in China:** China has executed 13 people, including one from Taiwan, after sentencing them to death for drug dealing on Friday, the pro-Beijing newspaper Wen Wei Po reported, Reuter says from Hong Kong.

The executions took place in southern China's Guangzhou city.

**600 get amnesty in Azerbaijan:** Nearly 600 prisoners in Azerbaijan received amnesty Saturday as a holiday gift from President Geidar Aliev, news reports said, AP reports from Baku, Azerbaijan.

Aliev tied the amnesties to Azerbaijan's Solidarity Day, marked December 31 by Azerbaijanis around the world since 1992.

**Quake shakes Turkish town:** A moderate earthquake with a magnitude of 3.8 shook this western town late Saturday night for a second time this week, AP reports from Emet, Turkey.

There was no report of damage or casualties. The epicenter was near Emet, some 400 kilometres (250 miles) west of the capital Ankara.

**Fighting leaves 9 dead in Somalia**

MOGADISHU, Dec 31: At least nine people died and seven others were wounded when fighting erupted between supporters of Somali warlords General Mohamed Farah Aidid and Ali Mahdi Mohamed at Donka village west of Mogadishu, the Somali Press reported Saturday, reports AFP.

The newspapers said fighting flared following sporadic shooting between Mursade clan militiamen who support the self-styled Somali interim President Ali Mahdi and those of the Abgal clan, which support general Aidid.

**BJP kicks off general election campaign on New Year's day**

NEW DELHI, Dec 31: India's main opposition party kicks off its general election campaign on New Year's day with its two top stalwarts launching marathon cross-country tours, reports AFP.

The Hindu revivalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, Indian People's Party) will be the first party to plunge into battle for the parliamentary polls widely expected in April.

BJP president Lal Krishna Advani will begin a country-wide 40 day tour from the southern state of Kerala on January 1, while his veteran colleague Atala Behari Vaj-

**Murayama will hand over power to Hashimoto**

TOKYO, Dec 31: Japanese Prime Minister Tomichi Murayama will hand over power as early as April to Ryutaro Hashimoto, leader of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), his major coalition partner, a newspaper said today, reports AFP.

The power transfer was agreed by Murayama, head of the Social Democratic Party (SDP), Hashimoto, who is also trade minister, and finance minister Masayoshi Takemura, who leads the New Party Sakigake, the mass-circulation Yomiuri Shimbun said, quoting government and coalition sources.

Murayama, 71, is expected to step down after parliament passes budget bills for the year around April. It will probably also follow the visit by US President Bill Clinton on April 16.

**Taliban rocket Kabul: 12 more wounded**

ISLAMABAD, Dec 31: Afghanistan's opposition Taliban Islamic militia fired rockets overnight at the capital Kabul, wounding 12 people, the official Kabul radio said on Saturday, reports Reuter.

The broadcast, monitored in Islamabad, said Taliban fired eight rockets into Kabul's residential areas, also destroying four houses and setting a car on fire.

Taliban has besieged Kabul since early October, vowing to oust President Burhanuddin Rabbani and install a purist Islamic order throughout Afghanistan.

AP adds: The attack came two days after President Burhanuddin Rabbani offered to meet his militant opponents to negotiate an end to the bloody fighting.

**Yemen, Eritrea must try to resolve conflict thru' talks: Ghali**

SANAA, Dec 31: Yemen and Eritrea must try to resolve their conflict over a Red Sea island through bilateral talks before taking the dispute to the United Nations, UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said on Saturday, reports AFP.

"The UN position is to avoid any escalation in the crisis and to do all it can to find a peaceful solution, first at the bilateral level and then at the regional level," Boutros-Ghali told a press conference in Sanaa.

"If these efforts do not succeed, it would then be possible to bring the matter before the higher authorities of the United Nations," he said.

He was speaking after meeting Yemeni President Ali Abdallah Saleh in Sanaa, before heading to Eritrea today.

**Clashes leave 13 killed in Turkey**

ANKARA, Dec 31: Ten Kurdish rebels and three members of Turkish security forces have been killed in four days of clashes in Turkey's eastern province of Sivas, a senior official said today, reports AFP.

Sivas Governor Aydin Guclu also said the security forces, conducting an operation in the region, destroyed a winter camp of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) fighting for an independent state in south eastern and eastern Turkey.

One rebel Kurd surrendered and three government troops were injured in the operation, he added.

Over 21,000 people, including Kurdish rebels, members of the security forces and civilians, have been killed in violence in southeastern and eastern Turkey since 1984 when the PKK launched its armed campaign.

**4 soldiers, 3 LTTE men killed**  
**Tigers raid army base as govt renews offer of peace talks**

COLOMBO, Dec 31: Tamil guerillas raided an army island base today, killing four soldiers and losing three of their own men as Sri Lanka's President Chandrika Kumaratunga renewed an offer of peace talks, officials said, reports AFP.

Gunmen of the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) carried out the pre-dawn raid on the Buffalo Island army detachment in the eastern district of Batticaloa, triggering a heavy fire fight, official sources said.

"The Tigers managed to kill four sentries and wound another three soldiers. At least three Tigers were killed in the counter-offensive and their bodies were recovered by the army," an official said.

An LTTE guerilla strapped with explosives had set himself off against an army truck in the same district but failed to kill any soldiers in a Kamikaze-style attack less

than a day earlier. The stepped-up attacks came as President Kumaratunga in remarks published today said that the government will have no alternative but to militarily crush the LTTE if the rebels do not enter peace talks.

"It is up to the LTTE to come for negotiations," Kumaratunga said in an interview with the state-run Sunday Observer. "However, if they carry out attacks, we will not hesitate to defend the people and the country."

Kumaratunga announced last month that the LTTE should make a "substantial surrender of arms" if they are to resume talks with the government in a bid to end the protracted conflict which has claimed over 50,000 lives since 1972.

For their part, the LTTE maintains that the army should withdraw from the northern town of Jaffna

which was captured from the rebels earlier this month after nearly 50 days of fighting. Some 500 soldiers and nearly 2,000 rebels died in the battle.

LTTE supremo Velupillai Prabhakaran said in a message to coincide with his birthday last month that the army should pull out from all areas wrested from his control and doors to peace will remain "firmly shut" until then.

The military says it will not budge from Jaffna, the capital of a de facto state the LTTE had run in the northern peninsula for nearly five years before the army stormed in with its biggest ground offensive launched on October 17.

President Kumaratunga said areas still under rebel control in the island's north would be taken either militarily or politically.



An Israeli artillery unit prepares itself to enter south Lebanon early on Saturday, after an overnight Katyusha rocket attack fired on northern Israel by the Islamic fundamentalist Hezbollah organisation. No casualties were reported in Israel but private homes were damaged. The two rocket attacks came only a few hours after that the first round of renewed peace talks between Israel and Syria ended in Maryland, USA. — AFP/UNB photo

**Suu Kyi for New Yr resolution to achieve HR, democracy**

YANGON, Dec 31: Aung San Suu Kyi, Myanmar's leading pro-democracy activist, has called for a collective New Year's resolution to make efforts towards successfully achieving democracy and human rights in the country, reports AFP.

"Let us make a New Year resolution to work as much as we can to successfully bring democracy and human rights to the country," she urged hundreds of people who gathered outside the gates of her home on Saturday.

Aung San Suu Kyi's weekend public appearances since her release from six years of house arrest on July 10 have become a regular feature

here and analysts here say they have become an irritant to the military junta.

The junta appears to have stepped up a media campaign singling her out for official criticism and accusing her of being a foreign "lackey" bent on disrupting law and order, they said.

The latest official commentary appeared in the English-language new Light of Myanmar Today, accusing her of being a "dictator," imposing her will on the people as well as members of her National League for Democracy (NLD).

State-organised mass rallies calling for the successful conclusion of the Constitu-

tional National Convention, which reconvened last month, receive daily front-page coverage in the official press.

The convention was boycotted by the NLD on the grounds that it was unacceptable to the people in its present form.

The mass rallies are officially organised to condemn the NLD move and denounce its leaders as subversive.

"In an apparent appeal to the military which has steadfastly refused to engage in dialogue with the opposition, Aung San Suu Kyi over the weekend called for "more mature thoughts and actions" in the New Year.



A French IFOR soldier, who protected his face against the cold, helps an old Bosnian-Muslim man to get his belongings out of a bus after the vehicle broke down on the way from Sarajevo to the eastern Bosnian enclave of Gorazde on Saturday. Bosnian Muslims crossed Saturday into Serb-controlled parts of Bosnia for the first time in more than three years. — AFP/UNB photo

**Minister escapes unhurt**  
**Attack on Assam health minister, 4 killed**

GUWAHATI, India, Dec 31: Four people were killed and 10 others injured when militants attacked the convoy of a minister in the troubled north-eastern Indian state of Assam overnight, police said today, reports AFP.

Urban guerillas of the outlawed United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) opened fire at the convoy of Assam Health Minister Bhupinder Barman in Nalbari district late Saturday killing two of bodyguards and two of his colleagues, police said.

"The militants who were hiding in the bushes alongside the road opened fire at the convoy. The firing continued for a few minutes. My bodyguards returned the fire but the militants escaped," Barman told AFP.

"I jumped from the car and walked about three kilometres (1.86 miles) across a paddy field to reach the Mulakmia police station. The militants chased me for about

a kilometre (nearly a mile) but I managed to reach the police station," Barman said. Seven security personnel and three civilians accompanying the minister's convoy in two other cars received serious injuries, police said.

Police said two of the cars in the convoy were badly damaged in the attack in which the guerillas used automatic rifles and lobbed hand grenades.

"One of the militants has been arrested," the police said.

The militants had twice earlier attacked Barman, who they allege has been responsible for the surrender of a large number of militants in Nalbari district, 120 kilometres (74 miles) north of capital Guwahati, two years ago.

The United Liberation Front of Assam was formed in 1979. The urban guerilla group, which "no longer tolerates colonial exploitation by India," is fighting for a sovereign socialist Assam.

## Off the Record

**Scholar, computer believe it was written by Shakespeare**

CHICAGO: A 383-year-old poem unearthed in a library may be the work of William Shakespeare, a scholar says. His computer agrees, reports AP.

Donald Foster found the poem, "A Funerall Elegy In Memory of the late Vertuous Maister William Peeter," in the Oxford University library in 1981.

It's about the death of a young actor in 1612, and Foster acknowledges that, even if it is accepted as one of Shakespeare's works, the 578-line poem will never be counted as one of his masterpieces.

"It's not a poem that will ever be widely loved," Foster said. "But it will change how we read his other texts. It is, in a way, a retirement poem, talking of theatricality as a fraud. He also talks of a sadder case of knowing shame, possibly scandal of a sexual nature."

It reads in part: "but whether doth the stream of my mischance drive me beyond myself, fast friend, soon lost, long may thy worthiness thy name advance amongst the virtuous and deserving most, who herein hast forever happy proved; in life thou livest, in death, thou diest beloved."

Foster of Vassar College presented his findings Saturday at the Modern Language Association's 111th annual convention.

He said Thomas Thorpe, publisher of Shakespeare's Sonnets, entered the 1612 elegy in London Stationers Register, a copyright depository, along with the initials "WS" Shakespeare's last plays were written at about the same time; he died in 1616.

Foster ran the poem through a computer programme called SHAXICON, which he wrote to weed out poetry not really written by Shakespeare. It compares word usage and style with that of Shakespeare and 50 other Elizabethan writers.

**Return from the dead!**

SHANGHAI: An 81-year-old woman rose from the dead as her body was being moved into the furnace of a crematorium in neighbouring Jiangsu province, a newspaper reported today, says AFP.

The Xinmin Evening News reported that Xue Wangshi had stopped breathing after an illness and was sent to Tongshan county crematorium to be cremated on December 2.

As her body was being move along a conveyor belt into the furnace, Xue moved her right hand, and when crematorium attendants stopped the belt, she sat up, the report said.

**Probe into '79 military coup**  
**Prosecutors summon ex-ROK FM, 2 others for questioning**

SEOUL, Dec 31: South Korean state prosecutors probing a 1979 military coup led by ex-president Chun Doo-hwan, have summoned a former foreign minister and two other people for questioning, state television said today, reports Reuter.

It said former foreign minister Park Tong-jin, another ex-government official and a former airborne battalion commander were being questioned.

The prosecution has been investigating the December 1979 military coup that was followed in May 1980 by an army massacre of pro-democracy protesters in the city of Kwangju.

The uprising was in protest against martial law imposed by then military strongman Chun. Demonstrators raided armouries and seized control of the city for

several days. About 200 students and citizens were killed in the crackdown, according to official reports, but dissidents and residents said the toll was much higher.

Prosecutors are questioning Park about the then Cabinet Council's approval of the extension of martial law to the whole nation, television said.

Media reports have alleged martial law was extended by order of military generals, including Chun, to take control over the transitional government of former president Choi Kyu-Hah.

The former airborne battalion commander was being quizzed about circumstances surrounding the bloody suppression of the civilian revolt.

On Saturday prosecutors questioned a handful of former army commanders.

**4 more killed in Karachi**

KARACHI, Dec 31: At least four people were shot and killed in isolated cases of ethnic violence in the southern Pakistani port city of Karachi on Saturday, raising this month's death toll to 95, police said, reports Reuter.

The four were killed in the city's east and central districts, police said. Two other people were wounded by gunfire.

Nine people were killed in overnight violence in Karachi ahead of a general strike by opposition Islamic parties, police and the ethnic Mohajir Qaumi Movement (MQM) said on Saturday.

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BJP officials say the proposed tours by Advani, a hardline Hindu nationalist, and Vajpayee, who is seen as a secular politician, will help prepare the party rank and file for the crucial hustings.

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